

The Crucible, Act III, by Arthur Miller
Enrichment: Career as a Lawyer

Act III of *The Crucible* gives us Miller's interpretation of how the American colonists may have felt toward court proceedings, judges, and legal matters in general. Then, just as now, courtrooms were places where people were morally obligated to tell the truth. Judges were powerful people who commanded the respect of those around them. There were also procedures to follow, such as the lawful way to make an arrest or to present evidence.

In modern America, the legal system establishes rules that affect personal, social, and business activities, and provides a way to resolve disputes.

Lawyers make up the largest portion of those who pursue legal careers. Most lawyers choose to specialize in a certain kind of practice. Real estate lawyers, for example, draw up legal documents that have to do with the buying and selling of land and buildings. Probate lawyers help clients draw up wills, deeds of trust, and other documents connected with the distribution of an estate. Corporate lawyers advise large companies of their rights, obligations, and privileges under corporate law. And securities and exchange lawyers oversee the activities of individuals and corporations that trade in corporate securities and stock.

A lawyer may become a judge either through election or appointment. Judges listen to case presentations, accept or reject evidence, and settle disputes between lawyers. They also instruct juries and decide on punishments for persons found guilty of crimes.

Behind the scenes, supporting the work of the lawyers and judges, are thousands of trained legal assistants, called paralegals. They assist lawyers with interviewing witnesses, conducting legal research, drafting documents, and so on. In addition legal researchers and editors prepare thousands of legal publications in the United States every year. Organizing those legal publications are law librarians who staff both private and public law libraries.

DIRECTIONS: *Use the information on this page to draw conclusions about the pursuit of a legal career.*

1. What workplace skills do you think would be most useful to a person who wants to be a legal assistant?

2. In addition to a law degree, what other skills or interests would aid a securities and exchange lawyer in his or her job?

3. What personal qualities and workplace skills do you think a judge should have?

4. Of the legal areas mentioned on this page, which field or specialty is the most appealing to you? Why?
